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Summary record of the 37th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 December 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 *(continued)* (A/52/7/Add.1 and 2, A/52/16/Add.1, A/52/303; A/51/950 and Add.1-6; A/C.5/52/20 and A/C.5/52/27)

1. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/303), said that it outlined the programmatic and financial consequences of the Secretary-General's reform proposals contained in document A/51/950. A number of changes had been made in some budget sections and new sections 1B, 2B and 34 had been created.

2. Under section 1A (Overall policy-making, direction and coordination), the Secretary-General proposed the establishment of a post of Deputy Secretary-General, whose immediate office would consist of one Director (D-2), one P-5, one personal assistant and two secretaries in the General Service category. A small Strategic Planning Unit would be set up to advise on critical medium-term trends that might affect the Organization's programme of work and to recommend strategic policy direction.

3. Section 1B (General Assembly affairs and conference services) provided for the creation of a new Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, whose major objective would be to ensure, through the provision of authoritative advice and substantive services, the orderly and procedurally correct conduct of the meetings and other work of the General Assembly. The new Department would assume responsibility for the activities concerning General Assembly affairs and decolonization, previously undertaken by the Department of Political Affairs, the technical secretariat servicing of the Economic and Social Council, formerly provided by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, and the Conference Services component of the Office of Conference and Support Services in the Department of Management.

4. Under section 2B (Disarmament), a Department of Disarmament Affairs would be established, headed by an Under-Secretary-General. The establishment of the new Department would entail the transfer, from the Department of Political Affairs to the new Department, of activities under programme 26, Disarmament, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, including the servicing of the Conference on Disarmament and backstopping to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

5. Under section 6 (Legal affairs), it was proposed to reclassify the D-2 post in the Office of the Legal Counsel to the Assistant Secretary-General level in order to strengthen the Office of Legal Affairs.

6. With regard to section 7A (Economic and social affairs), the Secretary-General had decided to consolidate policy coordination and sustainable development (section 7), economic and social information and policy analysis (section 9) and development support and management services (section 10) into a single department. Integration of support for policy formulation, analytical and normative functions and relevant technical cooperation activities would rationalize and strengthen competencies in the economic and social fields developed in different areas of the Secretariat, reduce overlapping and fragmentation of skills and create the necessary synergy to provide first-rate services to Member States in those fields.

7. Under section 14 (Crime control), it was proposed to reconstitute the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division as the Centre for International Crime Prevention, which, together with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, would form the new Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. Following the establishment of the Centre, special emphasis would be placed on the implementation of relevant General Assembly resolutions and declarations, in particular the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism. Two new posts (one P-5 and one P-4) were being proposed to strengthen the Centre's capacity to address issues related to terrorism.

8. Under section 22 (Human rights), it was proposed to reclassify the post of head of the New York Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from the D-1 to the D-2 level. The issue of human rights cut across each of four substantive fields of the Secretariat's work programme: peace and security; economic and social affairs; development cooperation; and humanitarian affairs. A major task for the United Nations, therefore, was to enhance its human rights programme and to integrate it fully into the broad range of activities of the Organization. The head of the New York Office would have additional substantive and representational responsibilities in line with the aforementioned efforts. In addition, it was proposed to reclassify a P-5 post in the Office of the High Commissioner to the D-1 level to serve as Special Assistant to the High Commissioner. The abolition of two General Service posts was also being proposed.

9. Under section 25 (Humanitarian assistance), the Secretary-General had decided to establish the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, headed by an Under-

Secretary-General, at United Nations Headquarters. The Coordinator would focus on the core functions identified by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/182 and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs would be discontinued in its current form. Following the reorganization and refocusing of the work of the Office of Emergency Relief Coordinator and the consolidation of functions, it was proposed to abolish 16 Professional and 9 General Service posts. In relation to the transfer to UNDP of responsibilities related to capacity-building, a provision of $2,309,300 was proposed as a contribution to be made to UNDP.

10. Under section 26 (Communications and public information), the Secretary-General, as part of the overall reform of the Organization, proposed to transform the Department of Public Information into an Office of Communications and Public Information, to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General. One of the recommendations of the task force which had been established to conduct an examination of the current activities of the Department of Public Information was that, in general, national personnel should be utilized as the main conduit for programme delivery and that emphasis should be placed on the strengthening of partnership links with local United Nations support groups. Information centres would also be streamlined to focus on information and communications activities and administrative posts would be reduced. It was proposed to abolish 51 local level posts, together with two General Service posts at the New York Information Centres Service, one P-4 and two General Service posts at the Geneva Information Service, and one General Service post at the Vienna Information Service. Resources released by the proposed reduction of posts would be redirected to enhance outreach and information activities within the centres through flexible use of local capabilities in United Nations programmes and activities, as well as updating related technologies.

11. Under section 27A (Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management), he said that the Department of Management would place emphasis on the determination of management policies, provision of management guidance and oversight of the effectiveness of managerial activities throughout the Secretariat. The new structure of the Department of Management would include a Management Policy Office headed by a Director at the D-2 level, which would provide policy advice and support the work of the Management Policy Committee.

12. In conclusion, under section 34 (Development account), the Secretary-General was proposing that a development account be established. The budgetary implications of the programme of reform dealt with in the report before the Committee amounted to a reduction of $12,702,700 in relation to the proposed programme budget. Proposals for the operation of the development account would be submitted to the General Assembly at a later stage.

13. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's second report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/7/Add.1), observed that it had been finalized before the General Assembly had completed its review of a number of the recommendations on reform contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950). Moreover the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the proposals contained in document A/51/950 had yet to be acted upon by the General Assembly. In a number of cases, additional information had been requested.

14. The Advisory Committee was concerned at the rate at which high-level posts were being created and had requested full information on such posts. In paragraphs 3 to 7 of its report (A/52/7/Add.1), it provided a number of options with regard to the creation of the post of Deputy Secretary-General and would consider the related financial implications once the General Assembly had selected an option. It recommended acceptance of all of the Secretary-General's staffing proposals for high-level posts, with the exception of the reclassification of the D-2 post in the Office of Legal Affairs. It was not convinced of the need for such reclassification. Indeed, after an exchange of views with the Legal Counsel, it had concluded that the Office needed increased staffing resources rather than a new post of Assistant Secretary-General.

15. With regard to section 1B (General Assembly affairs and conference services), it had requested additional information on the distribution and management of resources for the decolonization programme. It had also recommended that, starting with the biennium 1998-1999, resources for the Office of the President of the General Assembly, should be presented and approved on an object of expenditure basis.

16. The Advisory Committee's comments on section 25 (Humanitarian assistance) were contained in paragraphs 42 to 46. ACABQ questioned the appropriateness of having the Department of Peacekeeping Operations deal with the humanitarian aspects of demining and recommended that implementation of that function be monitored carefully. Regarding the transfer of responsibility for the coordination of disaster mitigation activities to UNDP, it was necessary to clarify whether those functions would, in future, be funded from extrabudgetary resources or whether they would continue to be funded from the regular budget. If the latter

was the case, the proposed provision of $2.3 million to UNDP could not be regarded as a one-time grant.

17. The table in paragraph 53 contained the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the level of appropriation for each section of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. It reflected the Advisory Committee's views on net budgeting and included the programme budget implications of a number of the recommendations contained in chapter II of the Advisory Committee's first report (A/52/7).

18. The Advisory Committee's recommendations amounted to approximately $48.9 million more than the amount proposed by the Secretary-General, which was largely attributable to the inclusion of amounts netted out under sections 1B, 29, 11 and 32. Had its recommendations been based on the net presentation of the Secretary-General, they would have amounted to $765,100 more than the Secretary-General's proposals. Regardless of whether it was based on the net presentation by the Secretary-General or the full presentation by the Advisory Committee, the amount that would have to be assessed on Member States would still be $2,214,142,300.

19. The third report of the Advisory Committee (A/52/7/Add.2) dealt with two issues: additional expenditures relating to the maintenance of peace and security and those deriving from inflation and currency fluctuations. In paragraph 7, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should make provision in the budget outline for expenditure for missions related to peace and security that were expected to be extended or approved during the course of the biennium. If that view was endorsed by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General should be requested to submit a technical proposal on the modalities for implementation.

20. On the question of additional expenditures deriving from inflation and currency fluctuation, the Advisory Committee had requested background information. It concurred with the Secretary-General's conclusion that, under the circumstances, the current mechanism for dealing with inflation and currency fluctuation might still be the most appropriate.

21. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination), introducing the report of that Committee on the work of its resumed thirty-seventh session (A/52/16/Add.1), said that the Committee had decided to recommend that, when considering the Secretary-General's reform proposals, the General Assembly should take into account the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

22. The Committee had taken note of the information contained in section 1B (General Assembly affairs and conference services) and section 7A (Economic and social affairs) and wished to draw the General Assembly's attention to the variations between the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and the Secretary-General's proposals.

23. The Committee had been unable to reach agreement on the conclusions and recommendations to be made to the General Assembly concerning section 2B (Disarmament), section 22 (Human rights), section 25 (Humanitarian assistance) and section 26 (Communications and public information).

24. With regard to section 14 (Crime control), the Committee had recommended that the General Assembly should take into consideration the views which Member States had expressed in the discussion of that section.

25. The Committee had taken note of the information contained in section 27A (Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management), 27C (Office of Human Resources Management) and 27D (Support services).

26. Finally, concerning section 34 (Development account), the Committee had noted the proposal to establish a development account, and had also noted that it was not an area within the scope of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. The modalities for its operation and the role of the General Assembly in the utilization of that account would need to be provided by the Secretariat to the General Assembly at a later date.

27. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) said that, while his delegation needed more time to adequately review the Advisory Committee's second report (A/52/7/Add.1), it supported many of the recommendations contained therein. For example, it supported the appropriation of $12.7 million in respect of the development account (para. 55), and it shared the Advisory Committee's concern at the tendency to increase the number of high-level posts (para. 56). In that connection, it welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the two posts that were to be abolished in the Examinations and Tests Section under section 27C should be restored, since that would contribute to the continued smooth implementation of the national competitive examination programme.

28. His delegation was convinced that the Secretariat would be able to clarify the various technical issues relating to the concept of "net budgeting" and that the Fifth Committee would be able to endorse the introduction of that format by the end of the current session. Every effort should be made to keep the final budget level below the figure of

$2,583 million, following the budget outline decided upon by the General Assembly.

29. Lastly, he appealed to Member States to make every effort to fulfil their obligations under the Charter, since the effort to achieve reform would end in failure unless a sound financial base was secured.

30. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea), supported by **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) and **Ms. Montaño** (Bolivia), said that the decolonization programme had been one of the major success stories of the United Nations. The Special Committee of 24 was doing its best to assist the peoples of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination and to achieve the goal of a world free of colonialism by the twenty-first century.

31. At the current critical stage in the decolonization process, it was of paramount importance for the Fifth Committee to approve the demand of many Member States that the Decolonization Unit should be maintained in the Department of Political Affairs and be provided with all relevant resources in conformity with the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. Such an action would also be in conformity with the pledge of the Secretary-General to the Chairman of the Special Committee of 24 contained in document A/52/531 and would also comply with the recommendations of ACABQ contained in paragraphs 14, 15, 16 and 21 of its report (A/52/7/Add.1). The issue had already been debated in many forums, and there was widespread support for the position of his delegation.

32. **Mr. Maddens** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union supported the Secretary-General's reform proposals as contained in document A/51/950. However, detailed discussion of the budget proposals contained in document A/52/303 should take place within the context of the discussions on the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

33. **Mr. Skjonsberg** (Norway) said that his delegation associated itself fully with the statement of the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Union.

34. **Mr. Deineko** (Russian Federation) said that the reform proposals put forward by the Secretary-General would no doubt have a major influence on the work of the Organization by increasing its effectiveness and ability to adapt to the realities of the contemporary world. His delegation had studied the proposals, many of which required careful consideration in the context of the adoption of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, and was prepared to take an active part in the discussions on their implementation.

35. His delegation had no objection to the proposal for the establishment of a post of Deputy Secretary-General, and it supported the recommendations of ACABQ regarding the staffing of that office contained in paragraph 8 of its report. It also concurred with the views expressed in paragraph 6.

36. His delegation supported the proposal to establish a Strategic Planning Unit, but it had serious doubts regarding the request for an additional $250,000 for the services of consultants and experts, and would like to receive clarification from the Secretariat.

37. His delegation welcomed the consolidation of almost all the Secretariat's conference-related functions in a single Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, as it viewed them as a substantive function of the Secretariat. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that the new Department received adequate financial and human resources. The proposal to reclassify the post of Director of that Department from D-2 to Assistant Secretary-General level should be given favourable consideration.

38. In view of the growing role of the President of the General Assembly, his delegation did not oppose increased funding for that Office, but it concurred with the recommendations in paragraph 20 of the report of ACABQ that those funds should be approved on an object of expenditure basis.

39. Although it had no objection to the opening of a Department of Disarmament Affairs in New York, his delegation felt that the proposal should be implemented within the context of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It was also important to maintain the lead role of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the existing regional centres for disarmament. In that connection, his delegation saw no reason for the new department to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General. It also supported the recommendation of ACABQ regarding the Office of the Legal Counsel contained in paragraph 28 of its report. His delegation looked forward to receiving a further report from the Secretary-General on the proposed development account and the "dividend for development" in general.

40. Finally, it fully supported the views expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 56, regarding the trend towards raising the grade level of posts, which would distort the grade "pyramid". In the report which ACABQ had requested on the grading structure, the Secretary-General should make proposals on ways to remedy that situation.

41. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement of the

representative of Papua New Guinea regarding the status of the Decolonization Unit. The report of ACABQ contained in document A/52/7/Add.1 had shed light on some of the ambiguities of the Secretary-General's proposal and the apparent contradictions with the proposed programme budget. His delegation strongly supported paragraph 15 of the report of ACABQ, and asked the Committee to recommend that the General Assembly should maintain all posts for the Decolonization Unit in conformity with the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and leave the post of Chief of the Unit at the D-1 level. There was no need to divide the work of the Unit between the Departments of Political Affairs and General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, since that would create overlap. The General Assembly must provide the Unit with a level of political consideration in keeping with its lofty task.

42. **Ms. Arce** (Mexico) said that her Government was concerned at the apparent decline in the number of regular budget posts in the new Department of Disarmament Affairs. From a preliminary review, it appeared that the Geneva office retained the same number of posts. However, in New York, one D-2 post, four P-5 posts and three General Service posts were being eliminated, and she would like to know the reasons. In the First Committee, many delegations had rejected the Secretary-General's proposal to eliminate the P-5 posts representing the heads of the three regional disarmament centres. She hoped that the new staffing table requested in paragraph 25 of the report of ACABQ would clarify the matter.

43. **Mr. Stanislaus** (Grenada) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Decolonization Unit. In order to expedite adoption of the programme budget, it was essential for the Fifth Committee to reinstate the Unit in the Department of Political Affairs and make available all necessary funds.

44. **Ms. Shearouse** (United States of America) said that her delegation formally requested clarifications and a legal opinion on some questions relating to net budgeting.

45. **Mr. Ayoub** (Iraq) said that, as a member of the Special Committee of 24, his delegation had been among the sponsors of a draft resolution on decolonization, which it had agreed to withdraw after receiving assurances that the Decolonization Unit would remain in the Department of Political Affairs. He joined other delegations in urging that the status of the Unit should remain unchanged.

Agenda item 160: Admission of the International Seabed Authority to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (A/52/233 and Add.1; A/C.5/52/26, A/C.5/51/1/Add.2)

46. **Mr. Gieri** (Secretary, United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund) said that the International Seabed Authority had requested membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. Article 3 of the Regulations of the Fund provided that membership was open to any international, intergovernmental organization that participated in the common system of salaries, allowances and other conditions of service of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. The International Seabed Authority met those criteria.

47. Article 3 also provided that admission would be by decision of the General Assembly upon the affirmative recommendation of the Pension Board, which had given a positive recommendation regarding the application through its Standing Committee.

48. If the application should be approved, membership of the International Seabed Authority in the Fund would become effective from 1 January 1998.

49. **The Chairman** said that he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly that it should adopt the following draft decision:

> "*The General Assembly*
>
> "*Decides* to admit the International Seabed Authority to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, in accordance with article 3 of the Regulations of the Fund, with effect from 1 January 1998."

50. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.